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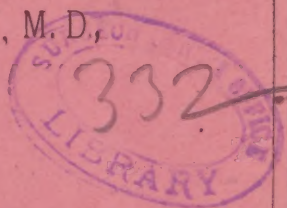
The Public Health Movement

Read before the Tri-State Medical Association of Mississippi,
Arkansas and Tennessee, November 7, 1887,

BY

J. BERRIEN LINDSLEY, M. D.,

NASHVILLE, TENN.



[Reprint from the Mississippi Valley Medical Monthly.]



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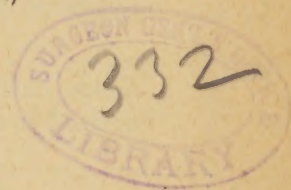
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The Medical Profession and the Public Health Movement.

The wonderful advances of the human race in the last half century, by reason of the application of the cosmical forces to man's work, is a topic worn threadbare. Yet in all these rhetorical flourishes one most notable achievement is strangely overlooked, namely, the remarkable increase in the average longevity of entire nations. This increase is akin to creative power, and in it hundreds of millions have participated.

The public health movement is indeed one of the grand features of this nineteenth century, and beyond question is destined to work a revolution in the medical profession.

When Hales invented the pneumatic trough, and thus opened the way for Priestley and his compeers to discover the complex constitution of the atmosphere, the first great step was taken. A volume would be requisite to detail the beneficent results of pneumatic chemistry.

The second step analogous in wide reaching fruit, comes quite recently from biology through the researches of Pasteur and others.

State preventive medicine originates, not from the medical profession, but is a result of the democratic tendencies of the current epoch.

Reason now arbitrates, and the people, by the divine right of fact, decree. Time was a few centuries since when reason submitted humbly to authority in all matters of religious and highest moment. Now all churches and all creeds, *ex necessitate*, do appeal to reason and submit their pretensions to the right of private judgment.

To a much later period political science was a study for rulers alone, the select and favored few. On July 4, 1776, flashed out a light destined ever to grow brighter and brighter,

now penetrating into every nook of christendom, symbolized by the phrase, government from the people, by the people and for the people.

The realm of science is the last to yield to the encroachments of universal democracy, but the surrender is complete. In the common school the masses are fully initiated into all the marvels of astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology. Henceforth there are no secrets from the people. They are invading the *penetralia* of the science and art of medicine, the most complex and recondite of all studies.

So it came to pass that immediately following the first great epidemic of Asiatic cholera in Britain, little over half a century since, in that freest and most enlightened legislative body as yet known in history, the British parliament, was asked in stern and emphatic tones the startling question, Why the millions of poor and industrious laborers suffered so out of all proportion to the higher and wealthy few?

An inquiry was ordered. In 1842 the result was given in a "Report," edited by a young civilian, Edwin Chadwick. In that volume was discussed with great clearness and effect nearly all the topics now occupying the attention of legislators and sanitarians. Its editor has from that day to this devoted all his energies to sanitary progress, and has won a name illustrious wherever science is known or philanthropy honored.

But though scientists and legislators originated the public health movement, yet from its very nature medical men were soon called upon to conduct and carry it into effect.

More space than is now allowed me would be required for mentioning the great labors of eminent British and American physicians in this field.

As an illustration, among the sixty-six original members of the American Public Health Association, now the leading sanitary organization on the Western Continent, are found the names of C. R. Agnew, Richard D. Arnold, Francis Bacon, A. N. Bell, Thomas Bevan, John S. Billings, Henry Bronson,

Francis H. Brown, J. L. Cabell, C. F. Chandler, C. C. Cox, Wm. Clendenin, Henry W. Dean, Chas. N. Ellingwood, Corydon La Ford, Elisha Harris, Henry Hartshorne, A. C. Hamlin, Chas. N. Hewitt, H. O. Hitchcock, G. W. Hough, Asa Horr, Ezra M. Hunt, Edward H. Janes, Edward Jarvis, H. A. Johnson, James Johnson, Emit Krackowiser, C. A. Leas, A. Liautard, Thos. Logan, E. J. Marsh, Wm. Marsden, Morean Morris, Robert D. Murray, Albert J. Myer, Thos. L. Neal, A. W. Perry, John H. Rauch, J. E. Reeves, S. C. Russell, Stephen Smith, Heber Smith, Edwin M. Snow, A. W. Smythe, Lewis H. Steiner, Joseph M. Toner, S. O. Van der Poel, Wm. C. Wey, C. B. White, J. J. Woodward, J. M. Woodworth, Morrill Wyman, fifty three medical men. Very much the same proportion is exhibited in all subsequent lists of members.

A glance at the principal topics embraced under our general head will show that the public is right in looking to medical men as leaders of the movement, and will at the same time show how remiss is our profession in Tennessee and the adjoining States in fulfilling this natural expectation.

Vital Statistics. As far back as the eighth Henry a system of parish registration became imperative in England. To-day even Jamaica publishes carefully prepared reports. Tennessee, the University State of the South, is shamefully behind in this *sine qua non* of statesmanship. The sister States are no better off. If the thousands of physicians in the States represented before me would only bestir themselves one winter this reproach would be removed. If there is a people upon the earth whom vital statistics should especially interest it is we of the South, with our Caucasian, African and Eur-African races.

Pure Air. Of all the free gifts of a beneficent Creator, the pure, life-giving atmosphere would seem to be the most abounding. Yet only last year an authority so eminent as Stanford E. Chaille, while placing the abuse of alcoholics as probably in the second place among the causes of avoidable diseases and death, unhesitatingly assigns impure air the first

place. The removal of this cause affords a splendid field to the profession, whether in private practice or in public station.

Drainage. This great topic is intimately connected with the above. Bowditch of New, and Buchanan of Old England have shown how much dampness has to do with causing consumption and other diseases. Drainage for economic purposes in America and Europe has proved to be worth many times its cost as preventing a large group of ailments. Drainage on a large scale, and with minute extensions, is yet to make the vast swamps on either side our great rivers, gardens for beauty and sites for healthy homes.

Filth Removal. There can be no pure air and no pure soil without constant and systematic removal of every description of organic refuse, which must necessarily accumulate about the house, the hamlet, the village, the city. This means CLEANLINESS. Filth is the universal curse. Always when epidemics prevail its abomination becomes apparent. Read Keating on the Memphis Yellow Fever, 1878, and a hundred other writers of equal authority if not so graphic. The germ theory explains the exceeding evil of filth, and the wonderful efficacy of cleanliness.

“Look at the surgery of London, of Paris, of Vienna, of New York, of twenty years ago, with its unclean hands, its fatally dirty instruments, its death-laden sponges, and its foul air, with its terrible mortality, and then look at the surgery of those same cities to-day,” says Dr. T. Gaillard Thomas, in emphasizing the necessity and efficacy of perfect cleanliness in the lying-in room.

The history of surgery during the past quarter of a century is but a demonstration of the value of cleanliness in connection with human life. Hence, every medical man is without excuse for not comprehending its prime importance in daily life.

The New Quarantine and Epidemics. One of the most beneficent results of modern sanitary science, is the system of measures devised for preventing the spread of epidemic and

contagious diseases. Instead of the inhuman and atrocious barbarities of the old quarantine abomination of forty days, we have prudently studied detention and isolation, with all possible comfort and medical attention. Commerce is not unnecessarily interfered with, the public is protected from the careless importation of infection, and the unfortunate stranger within our gates, or citizen at home, struck down by smallpox, cholera or yellow fever, receives every attention which money can procure or professional skill extend.

This *new* quarantine requires large funds and costly vigilance, which only wealthy governments can command. It is yet only in its beginnings. The best examples are furnished by the State of Louisiana and the Dominion of Canada. Our imperial republic of America ought in this respect to furnish an example to all the world.

Local sanitation and local organization, under law, must be had in order to apply the simple but pregnant axioms of science to groups of households.

The M. D. who cannot enter into this practical work is unworthy of his diploma.

All our medical journals give late and valuable sanitary information, and full notices of the book literature of the subject.

There is also a large periodical list devoted to sanitary and kindred subjects. The general practitioner would do well to obtain copies from the entire list, and then subscribe for that which most suited him. Hence, is appended the following catalogue by no means complete. All such journals very courteously furnish specimen numbers on application.

Bulletin of the North Carolina Board of Health, Wilmington, N. C.

Monthly Bulletin of the Iowa State Board of Health, Des Moines, Iowa.

The Sanitary Inspector, Maine State Board of Health, Augusta, Me.

State Board of Health Bulletin, Nashville, Tenn.

Public Health in Minnesota, Red Wing, Minn.

The Sanitary News, 134 Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

Engineering and Building Record, New York City.

The Sanitarian, 113 Fulton, New York City.

Annals of Hygiene, Philadelphia, Pa.

Medical Hygiene and Sanitary Science, Wilmington, Del.

American Architect, 211 Fremont St., Boston.

"Building," No. 6 Astor Place, Box 27, Station D, New York City.

Journal of Dietetics, Cleveland, O.

Anti-Adulteration, Philadelphia, Pa.

Journal of Reconstructives, P. O. Box 3042, New York City.

The Microscope, Ann Arbor, Mich.

American Analyst, 176 Broadway, Room 20, New York City.

The Sanitary Era, 710 Broadway, New York City.

